

Io That First Spring

All the rain has spawned frogs.
Puddles birth them and the night
throws cicadas out of its cave
by the fistfuls. Pugnacious night.
Full of terror. Faint traces of mold inch
up the eggplants, their stalks lightning-lit.
Each tree, each weed, each quack grass
and henbit starkly visible, silhouetted against
the sky, before the crash of thunder and darkness.
All day the hawk hunted the fields
and near woods, calling like a frightened child.
Just once, even just for this night, she wishes
all this scrabbled need would stop. Grasshoppers,
thumb-large, bony, cognizant-faced, mouths chewing
side to side, thump as regular as heartbeats,
moving less than a fingernail's width, all day,
all night, dying, trapped between the shade cloth
and the plastic murky with mildew. The few
lucky ones slip just far enough over the roof's curve,
lose footing, and slide down the greenhouse
into the mint bed with a sound like blood
swooshing through a faulty heart valve.
It's true. A dream is the only reason she keeps going.
She's still searching the creek bank for the stone
she needs to swallow to kill the giant creature
in her chest who keeps the words she needs
to describe this life hidden under its wings.
Stricken life. Stricken dream. Get up and limp
into a stranger, holding out your hands,
opening and closing your mouth, uttering
those small mewlings, those animal sounds.